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CHILDREN IN THE GLASS WORKS OF ILLINOIS

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All who have had experience in child labor legislation know that each state—sometimes a group of states—has its own particular problem to solve, relating to the employment of children in the industries of that state. In some states it is the mining industry; in others the cotton industry, and in Illinois, as in many others, it is the glass industry.

When we were working for our present law, the glass manufacturers of Illinois kept some one at Springfield to watch and oppose each step of the law, and in all of the arguments they always closed with, "If this law goes into effect it will drive this industry out of the state."

Perhaps all do not know the character of the work in a glass factory. Every glass blower has to have two or three boys to assist him in the work. The glass blower pours the molten glass into the molds; a boy sits and closes the molds; another one picks the bottles out of the molds and puts them on a long stick or handle, and puts them in front of a small furnace, which is called "the glory hole," where the top or the neck of the bottle is finished. Then they are placed on a long tray, and the boys carry them into the annealing furnaces, where they are gradually cooled.

One of the arguments advanced by those who are most interested in keeping boys in the glass factories is that it requires the agility and activity of boys to carry these bottles to the annealing furnaces, for they cannot get men or adults to run as these boys do most of the time between the ovens and the furnaces. The day shift of one week is always the night shift of the next, which means that the boy who worked during the day this week, the next week will work at night. The night shift generally leaves the factory at

half-past three or four o'clock in the morning. Now it is very easy to see that coming away from those heated furnaces out into the chilly, cool air of the winter morning makes the boys liable to colds and pulmonary diseases.

The moral influences surrounding the boys in a glass factory are generally bad. Anyone who visits a glass factory will see little saloons or grog shops all around the factory, and while a great many factories prohibit liquor being brought into the factory, all do not. In some factories the boys carry the liquor, but where it is prohibited this temptation meets them when they first leave the factory and, coming out into the chilly morning air, debilitated by the labor and heat, of course the temptation is great to take something that will stimulate them. Around all the factories there is a high board fence, and on top of this fence are two or three barbed wires. When I inquired at one of the factories the reasons for this, one of the reasons given me by one factory was, "Well, it keeps the boys in for one thing." The glass blowers are very dependent upon their helpers, and if the boys leave at a critical time the glass blowers are obliged to stop their work. Of course, I do not mean to say that this is the only reason for this high fence, but it is doubtless one.

The work of the boys in the factory is irregular and requires no training nor skill. In some factories where I visited I found that boys received forty cents extra at the close of the week if they worked the entire week and if they did good work.

Through the National Child Labor Committee two years ago I was permitted to visit a large number of the glass factories in both Indiana and Illinois. I not only visited the factories, but the homes also, to learn the health of the child, the grade he was in when he left school, the conditions of the factory, if he worked nights, and his wage. These and many other questions the schedules of the Child Labor Committee required to be answered. During this investigation I came to the conclusion that the character of the young help in the glass factory was greatly changed; that the most intelligent parents throughout the country were becoming convinced that the glass factories were not the places for their boys. It was very seldom that the child of a glass blower was found in the factory. Generally the children of glass blowers were kept in

school. Mr. Root, of the Root Glass Company, said: "The smaller number of boys that are found in the factories throughout the country is due to the changed conditions of labor. The large glass industries attract to them large numbers of foreigners, and the American boys are not being employed in the glass factories as they were some time ago."

I was told a number of times that the Glass Blowers' Union was the only thing that kept the intelligent workmen in the trade, and that manufacturers never objected to this union, because they recognized this fact: it is the only inducement that is offered to intelligent men and to parents to allow their boys to enter the work. The apprenticeship system among the glass blowers is such that a very long time is required, and it is a fact that a very few of the boys who enter the glass factories ever become apprentices.

One manufacturer admitted to me that the boys in the glass industry generally were smaller and not as well developed as the boys who had lived a normal life outside. He said he thought this did not argue that they were not as well.

Mr. Root did not object to the prevailing laws as long as his competitors were subject to the same restrictions; he did not think that a law prohibiting boys under sixteen from being employed *could* be enforced. He said he knew of one manufacturer where there had been returned thirty-two indictments against him, not one of which had ever been brought to trial.

At the time of my investigation I was convinced that there was some degree of reason in his remarks. At least I felt quite sure that the glass manufacturers were *not* obeying the laws in this respect.

I talked with the president of one of the large glass blowers' unions in Indiana. He said that he had been in that particular factory for three years; that during that time he had never seen an inspector or the results of a visit from one; that in the factories where affidavits were required the manufacturer simply sent home a paper by one of the children which was signed by the parent and brought back.

In one of the factories in Indiana I insisted upon seeing the affidavits. There was a little bundle of affidavits brought out to me that were several years old, none of which could apply to any of the children that were at that time employed in that factory.

The president of the union in Indiana said that he had worked in Alton as well as in Indiana, and he thought that the conditions were much worse in Indiana than they were in Illinois. Night work is not prohibited in Indiana. It was quite the customary thing for school children to go into the factory at night and work until eleven and twelve o'clock and go to school during the day. This would be found especially true on Thursday and Friday nights.

I went to the inspector's office in Indiana and talked with him in regard to the condition in Indiana, and he told me that he only had five inspectors; that with five inspectors a state the size of Indiana could not be inspected. This is something for us to consider. The factory force should have the number of inspectors that is necessary for thorough work and a sufficient appropriation to carry on the work.

The best factory I found was in Indiana—the Ball Brothers factory—which I hope is a sample of the future glass factory, where machinery is gradually taking the place of the boy. In talking with Mr. Ball, he said that he thought that the time was not far distant when machinery would take the place of boys in all glass factories.

It seems to me that the glass manufacturers are not only *not* living up to the law themselves, but that they are educating children to be law-breakers. When we visited Alton two years ago we went through the factory, both in the afternoon and in the evening, and we found a model factory. The next day when I was visiting in the homes of the children who worked in the factory, in order that I might gain the data required, I was told in quite a number of homes that this factory had known that we were to visit them, and had been prepared for our visit. After I had received a great deal of this information I went back to the factory and made known what I had discovered during the afternoon: that I had learned that they were prepared for our visit. Mr. Smith, of the Alton Glass Factory, said to me: "But, madam, if you were informed that the enemy was in the field, what would you do? Wouldn't you take all precautions that were necessary to protect yourself?"

When I was asked to talk upon this subject at the Third National Child Labor Convention I did not think it would be fair to speak upon the conditions as I found them two years ago. It seemed

obligatory at least to visit the largest plant, the Alton glass factory. I reached Alton last Wednesday morning, at eight minutes past six. I took a car and went down at once to the glass factory. On the way there a gentleman in the car told me that a few days before he had seen two little, very ragged, dirty boys taking the dinner out to their father in the factory, and he asked them why they were not in school. They said they did not have clothes to go to school, and one of them told him that the oldest one would be old enough next year to go to work. He told me that these two boys were growing up there without any education and were being kept at home for the sake of carrying their father's dinner every day.

When I arrived at the glass factory it was about half-past six. There are two large gates at the Alton factory where the employees enter to work. I stood at the upper gate from half-past six until a few minutes past seven, until all the employees had entered for work. I saw perhaps two or three hundred employees enter the yard. I did not keep an actual tally of the children that entered. But I am sure that I am giving a conservative estimate when I say that the age of at least forty or fifty of the children that went into that yard would have been questioned by any disinterested person.

I was told that our factory inspectors had been through Alton only a week before, and had found quite a number of violations, and that they had quite heavily fined the firm. Perhaps that is the reason why I saw so many that morning. I presume it is quite natural for a factory to feel that after a visit from the inspectors they certainly have a little time when they need not be so strict.

In the forenoon of this same day I went back to the Alton Glass Factory and asked if I might go through the factory. I was quite peremptorily refused. Mr. Levis said he didn't think it would do any good; that they had been painted quite as black as they could be, and he wasn't willing for me to go through their factory.

Not far away from where the factory is located there is a tract of land that is very low and swampy, a very uncomfortable place to live, but where a great many of the people live whose children work in factories. I went down into that locality and visited from house to house. At the second house I went into the sister told me that her brother was asleep; that he had worked the night before in

the factory. I asked her how old he was; she said he was fifteen. The next house that I went into there was a small boy in the room who, his mother said, was twelve. The boy said he had been sent home from the factory that morning because the inspectors were there. I asked her if he had an affidavit; she said, no. I asked him: "How long have you worked in the factory?" He said: "I've worked here one month—one week, days, and one week, nights." In going from house to house, I found a number of children whose mothers told me they were not sixteen; they were fourteen and fifteen, who had worked all night the night before in the factory. It seems to me from what I saw and heard that the Alton glass works are not living up to the requirements of the law.

Being so near East St. Louis, I also visited the glass factory there. On my way to the office I was overtaken by two girls, who told me that anyone could walk in, and one of them said, "I will take you where the children work, "we girls hide the kids when the factory inspectors come in." I said: "Why do you do it?" "O, well, I would like to be hid if I was their age; but," she said, "I think it is a mistake to send them to work so young. They are employing boys for thirty-five and forty cents a day to do men's work."

It was the time of recess, and at the door of the factory there was quite a large group—at least ten or twelve very small boys—who, at the sound of the whistle, scampered back to the furnaces. When I went into the factory the foreman tried immediately to attract my attention. He said: "I want to show you where they are putting glass into the furnace to be melted and where they are packing, that you may know the work is not hard. I saw at a glance that he was trying to give these boys time to get out of the way, but I saw a number of boys that any one would have said were certainly very small to be working in a glass factory.

From this investigation and my own judgment, I have come to the conclusion that the glass manufacturers throughout the country are not obeying the laws for the regulation of child labor; that they are not only not living up to the requirements of the law, but that they are teaching our young children that it is not necessary to obey laws.

Education is helping to eliminate the American child from the

glass factories, and that education must be extended. We must have a type of public school that will appeal to our foreigners; we must have more industrial education; we must have trade schools. If the parents and children were convinced that continuing in school meant industrial training; that it meant a step nearer receiving a living wage, and entering a more skilled trade, our factory and our compulsory education laws would be more easily enforced than they are at present.